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ABSTRACT

In the case of Lucile Bluford, a respected Black woman journalist applying for admission to the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1939, an examination of the archives and records, newspaper and magazine articles, scholarly works on the case, and an interview with Miss Bluford makes it clear that University of Missouri officials were preoccupied with maintaining the separation of the races. The dean of the School of Journalism and state legislators worked to establish a separate (but clearly unequal) School of Journalism at Lincoln University so that Black students would not have to be admitted to the University of Missouri. The color barrier was broken in 1950. Fifty years after being turned away, Lucile Bluford was awarded an honorary doctorate of the humanities. (Ninety-seven notes are included.) (RS)

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**Storming and Defending the Color Barrier at the
University of Missouri School of Journalism:
The Lucile Bluford Case**

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Storming and Defending the Color Barrier at the University of Missouri School of Journalism: The Lucile Bluford Case

When the University of Missouri-Columbia established its School of Journalism in 1908, students from such nations as India, China and the Phillipines soon enrolled.¹ But the school's doors were closed to native-born black Americans until the mid-1950s. Lucile Bluford, a reporter and editor for a black weekly Kansas City newspaper, The Call, tried to break this selective color barrier in 1939 by applying for admission to the School of Journalism as a graduate student. The response of university and journalism administrators to Bluford's attempt to enroll demonstrated that segregation of higher education in Missouri was maintained with their cooperation and support.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the nation's oldest School of Journalism excluded blacks by examining a significant attempt by a respected black journalist to gain admission. My sources include newspaper and magazine articles, letters kept by the University of Missouri archives, records kept at Lincoln University, other scholarly work on the Bluford case and a personal interview with Miss Bluford. Although most of the news accounts in both the white and black press of the time used the term "negro" when referring to persons of African ancestry, I have elected to use the term black in this paper.

Background: The "Separate but Equal" Doctrine and the Gaines case

When Bluford attempted to enroll, Missouri operated under the "separate but equal" doctrine of education: Lincoln University in Jefferson City was for blacks, the University of Missouri for whites. The legal precedent for this system had been set by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision in its Plessy v. Ferguson decision, which upheld a Louisiana law that required railroad companies to provide "equal but separate accommodations for the white, and colored, races."² In the 1930's, the National Association for the

¹Memo in Negro Students file, C:1/101/39, Box 2, Folder 3, University of Missouri-Columbia Archives.

²Mark V. Tushnet, The NAACP's Legal Strategy against Segregated Education, 1925-1950 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 21-22.

Advancement of Colored People was developing a legal campaign against school segregation. Suits to desegregate public graduate and professional schools were among the three major types of litigation handled by the NAACP legal staff between 1933 and 1950, the others being suits to equalize salaries of black and white teachers and suits challenging unequal physical facilities at black and white elementary and secondary schools. NAACP members and its attorneys encouraged black plaintiffs to step forward by making it known, through speeches and publications, that lawyers were available to help people who wanted to challenge segregation.³ Spearheading the NAACP's legal battle against segregation in education was Charles Houston, a black attorney who believed that education would better prepare black citizens for "the leadership of the race."⁴

Missouri law attempted to meet the "separate but equal" requirement while maintaining segregation in higher education by authorizing Lincoln's Board of Curators to "pay reasonable tuition fees" for a black student to attend courses at an adjacent state or to "open any necessary school or department." in those cases where Lincoln did not offer courses desired by black state residents.⁵ The NAACP opposed scholarship programs both because they perpetuated segregationist views and because the scholarship would have paid only the student's out-of-state tuition, not extra expenses for living away from home.⁶ Schools of journalism and law were not among Lincoln's programs. In the early 1930's, there is evidence that blacks had tried to enter the University of Missouri. Nathaniel A. Sweets of St. Louis, editor of a black newspaper, St Louis American, applied in 1935 to the journalism school but was refused admission.⁷

The biggest challenge to Missouri's segregated system of higher education centered around a black St. Louis youth named Lloyd Gaines. Gaines had earned an A.B. degree from Lincoln University in 1935.⁸ He applied in 1935 for admission to the University of Missouri School of Law. After his application was rejected, NAACP lawyers, including Houston, filed legal action to force the University to admit Gaines. Both the Boone County

³Tushnet, p. 148.

⁴Tushnet, p. 34.

⁵Missouri Revised Statutes, 1929, Vol. II, sec. 9622 (Laws 1921), p. 86.

⁶Tushnet, p. 71.

⁷"Lucile Bluford loses damage suit against Missouri U. Registrar," The Call (Oct. 25 1940), p. 2.

⁸Robert McLaran Sawyer, "The Gaines Case: Its Background and Influence on the University of Missouri and Lincoln University 1936-1950," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1966), p. 154.

Circuit Court and the Missouri Supreme Court ruled against Gaines.⁹ The case then went to the U.S. Supreme Court where, on November 9, 1938, university lawyers defended as constitutional the principle of racial segregation. Gaines' lawyers argued that his rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution were being denied by the State of Missouri. On December 12, 1938, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Gaines' favor, ruling that the state of Missouri could not meet its obligation to provide equal access to education for blacks by paying their tuition at out-of-state schools. In short, the U.S. Supreme Court said Missouri was obliged to provide legal training to Gaines within its borders.¹⁰

The ruling sent shock waves through the "Show Me" state, but did not mean the end of segregated education. The Sixtieth General Assembly of Missouri convened in Jefferson City the day after the Supreme Court ruling and passed House Bill 195, requiring the Board of Curators of Lincoln University to "reorganize said institution so that it shall afford to the negro people of the state opportunity for training up to the standard furnished at the State University of Missouri."¹¹ Governor Lloyd C. Stark approved the act on May 4, 1939, and Lincoln University prepared to create a law school.

University officials knew the Gaines ruling could affect other school programs, including journalism. In a December 19, 1938, letter labeled "personal and confidential" to Kansas City attorney William Hogsett, who represented the university in the Gaines case, President Frederick Middlebush related conversations with a man he identified only as Mr. Phillips (possibly state representative V.E. Phillips from Jackson County) and three deans about the "negro case." Middlebush wrote:

Phillips was emphatically of the opinion that the policy of separated program [sic] of education in the State of Missouri would not be changed; and he was also very clearly of the opinion that it would be necessary to set up an appropriation, earmarked, for the purpose of establishing such schools and departments as might be needed at Lincoln University. ... He raised the question as to whether the decision would be applicable to work other than law work, in which it might be successfully maintained that equality of training could not be given in the law school of a neighboring state; whereas equality of training in engineering, medicine, journalism, as well as graduate work, could be given in another state.¹²

⁹Sawyer, p. 181.

¹⁰State of Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada. Registrar of the University of Missouri, file in Missouri Supreme Court Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri, pp. 348-350, cited in Sawyer, pp. 185-187.

¹¹Laws of Missouri, 1939, p. 686, cited in Sawyer, pp. 188-189.

Middlebush noted that he was "very much interested in his (Phillip's) reaction to the constitutional points involved in the decision."

Gaines, while waiting for the outcome of his case, enrolled in the University of Michigan with the financial help of the NAACP and earned a master's in economics in 1937. He left a job in Lansing after the Supreme Court decision and returned to St. Louis, expecting to be able to enter the University of Missouri law school in September, 1939. Discouraged by the delay and in need of money, Gaines sought employment in Chicago. Finding none, he moved to a fraternity house. On March 19, 1939, he left the fraternity house on an errand and was never heard from again.¹³

Background: Lucile Bluford

The Gaines case was on Lucile Bluford's mind in late 1938. The 27-year-old editor at The Call was familiar with Missouri's out-of state tuition law. The state of Missouri had paid part of her tuition to attend the University of Kansas School of Journalism, where, as only the second black student, she earned a bachelors in 1932.¹⁴ Bluford also was familiar with the Gaines case. After her attempt to enroll at the University of Missouri, she wrote about Gaines for the NAACP's magazine, The Crisis.¹⁵ In fact, Bluford said she heard Gaines speak in Kansas City and took him to the train station where he boarded a train bound for Chicago.¹⁶ Although she does not recall the date, The Call printed an announcement on February 17, 1939, that Gaines would speak. Gaines apparently had made a speech for the NAACP in Kansas City while on his way to Chicago in late February or early March of 1939.¹⁷ So Bluford very well may have been one of the last Missourians to see Gaines alive.

Although Bluford often claimed that Gaines disappearance motivated her to attempt to

¹²President Frederick Middlebush letter to William S. Hogsett, Dec. 19, 1938, University of Missouri President's Office file, col. 2582, Joint Collection, University of Missouri, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia and State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts.

¹³Edward T. Clayton, "The Strange Disappearance of Lloyd Gaines," Ebony, 6:23 (May 1951), pp. 26-33.

¹⁴Interview with Lucile Bluford, Kansas City, Missouri, Nov. 22, 1988.

¹⁵Lucile Bluford, "Missouri 'Shows' the Supreme Court," The Crisis, 46:8 (August 1939), p. 231.

¹⁶Bluford interview.

¹⁷Clayton, p. 30.

enroll at the University of Missouri, she must have had other motives.¹⁸ Her first attempt to enroll came two months before he was last reported seen and nine months before NAACP lawyers realized that Gaines was missing.¹⁹ A more likely explanation for her decision to enroll is found in her August, 1939, article for The Crisis, in which she describes her attempt to gain admission to the University of Missouri:

In the meantime, while M.U. officials were trying to nullify the Gaines decision, the Negroes of the state were seeking ways and means of making the decision effective at once. Knowing that Gaines himself could not begin his law course until September, 1939 (because the law course may be begun only in the fall semester), other students filed applications for admittance to M.U. at the beginning of the second semester in February.²⁰

Bluford's background made her an ideal candidate for a test case. She came from a family that valued both education and civil rights. Bluford's father, John H. Bluford, had degrees from Howard University and Cornell. Her mother was a graduate of Oberlin College. Her brother, Guion Bluford, earned a degree from the University of Kansas in mechanical engineering in 1936.²¹ Her father moved to Missouri from North Carolina, because she said he thought it "more Northern" and would have better educational opportunities for his children.²² John H. Bluford was a member of the NAACP and his daughter's girlhood memories included attending NAACP conventions with her father.

Lucile Bluford was inspired to become a journalist by her teacher at Kansas City's Lincoln High School, Trussie Smothers, who advised the student newspaper, The Lincolnite, and the yearbook, The Lincolnian. Bluford was on both staffs.

"At that time, there weren't too many professions open to black women," Bluford said. "Teaching, nursing, social work. I knew I didn't want to be a teacher. I thought about being a librarian."²³

After graduation from the University of Kansas, she spent a few months at the Atlanta

¹⁸Bluford interview and Writing for Rights: The Lucile Bluford Story, videotape by MT Productions in cooperation with Jackson County, Missouri, Chapter of Links, Inc., at Bluford Branch, Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library. 1987.

¹⁹Sawyer, p. 195.

²⁰Bluford, Crisis, p. 231.

²¹Letter from the University of Kansas Endowment Association, Dutton Brookfield Papers, fol. 449, WHMC.

²²Bluford interview.

²³Ibid.

Daily World before returning to The Call, where she had worked during her college years.²⁴

The Bluford Case

Inspired by Gaines, Bluford wrote to Missouri officials sometime in January of 1939 seeking to enroll. University officials, unaware of Bluford's race, accepted Bluford's credentials and sent her cordial letters. Registrar S.W. Canada wrote to Bluford on January 10, 1939, that he was "pleased to know that you are interested in the University of Missouri," and told her to send her University of Kansas transcripts to the University of Missouri.²⁵ He wrote again on January 19, 1939, acknowledging receipt of her transcript but cautioned "Because of the short time remaining before the opening of the winter semester, I think you must expect to call at this office after you come to Columbia for your permit to enroll. This procedure will not delay you, however, in registering at the regular time."²⁶

In a first person account for The Call, Bluford described her actions on January 30, 1939, when she walked onto the University of Missouri campus at about 1 p.m. and stood in line to obtain an enrollment permit. Years later Bluford said that because her father feared for her safety, two or three NAACP lawyers from Kansas City accompanied her to Columbia, although they were not with her when she attempted to enroll.²⁷ Other students, she wrote, paid "no more attention to me than they would any other new student enrolling."²⁸ She was about fourth from the counter when a secretary asked her name and whether her credits were on file. When Bluford replied that they were, the woman asked her to step out of line and led her to Canada's office. He, "smiling cordially," asked Bluford to come inside and have a seat, then read her a statement he said had been sent to him by the Board of Curators to "read to any Negro students that might apply."

²⁴Dorothy Davis, "She Knocks at the Door of Missouri University," The Crisis, 47:5 (May 1940), p. 140.

²⁵Letter from Registrar Canada to Bluford, Jan 10, 1939, Lucile Bluford folder, UMC Archives.

²⁶Letter from Canada to Bluford, Jan 19, 1939, Bluford folder, UMC Archives.

²⁷Bluford interview.

²⁸Bluford, "Missouri U. Finds Loophole to Prevent Negro From Enrolling," The Call (Feb. 3 1939), pp. 1, 3.

Although The Call printed two slightly different transcriptions of the statement, it was probably this one, found in the University Archives:

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Gaines case has not yet become final but is still pending in the Supreme Court of Missouri for further consideration. When the courts have rendered a final judgment in this case, no doubt the officials of Missouri will take such action as seems best to meet the situation.

The people of Missouri have established a separate educational system for the races in the State, and any negro desiring university work should apply to Lincoln University which has been established for that purpose.

Pending a final decision of this matter, the Board of Curators of the University of Missouri cannot and will not alter the long established policy of this State.²⁹

Canada told Bluford he was "sorry" she could not enroll, but said he was glad she "came from Kansas City and not St. Louis because he had just learned that a car bringing students to Columbia from the Mound City had been stuck in the snow on the highway." He said the matter might be straightened out by September and she "might be able to enroll then."³⁰

Bluford apparently then sought out the dean of the School of Journalism, Frank Martin. A student handing out enrollment blanks at the university library "flushed when he saw me," Bluford wrote, and "fingered the enrollment blank, not knowing whether to give it to me or not. His embarrassment was relieved when I told him I wanted to see Dean Martin."³¹

Martin, Bluford wrote, was cordial and told her she had enough University of Kansas journalism credits to enroll, but that she could not enroll without a permit to enroll. Both he and she knew that she could not get the permit. Bluford said other students expressed surprise that she was denied permission to enroll and quoted an unnamed journalism faculty member who said "the professors and instructors had no objection to teaching a Negro."³²

Bluford was not the only black student to attempt to enroll that day. The St. Louis Argus, a black weekly, reported that other blacks attempting to enroll that day were "Miss

²⁹Negro Students file, statement dated January 30, 1939, C:1/101/39 Box 2, folder 3, UMC Archives.

³⁰"Missouri U. Finds Loophole," The Call, p. 3.

³¹Bluford, "Nothing Will Happen When Negro Student Is Admitted to M.U." The Call (Feb. 3 1939), p. 1.

³²Ibid.

Ethel Rhodes of 4252 Enright Ave., honor graduate of Lincoln U. '39 January class and Sumner High School in '34 who sought a grad course in history, and Alvin W. Rose of 3975 Enright Ave, honor graduate of Lincoln in June '38 and Douglass High of Webster."³³

Bluford's attempt to gain admission provoked headlines in both the white and black press. The Call ran a front page banner headline, "M.U. REJECTS WOMAN STUDENT," along with three articles on the front page, two by Bluford herself.³⁴ The St. Louis Argus editorialized that "Intelligence knows no color. The mere fact that one is the offspring of a slave is no logical reason that he should be denied an education."³⁵ The Kansas City Times quoted an unnamed registrar's assistant as telling Bluford, "But it doesn't say on your transcript that you're a Negro."³⁶

Registrar Canada was candid in his February 4 letter to Bluford explaining why she could not be admitted. He said "when your credits were accepted by correspondence it was not known by the University authorities that you were of the colored race. If such fact had been known then you would have been immediately advised at time that you could not be admitted."³⁷

Bluford's next move was to write to Canada on August 14 to renew her application. Canada told her to take the matter up with the Board of Curators of Lincoln University.³⁸ Canada referred to legislation adopted after the Gaines case requiring Lincoln University to offer additional courses when formally requested. So Bluford wrote on September 8 to Sherman D. Scruggs, president of Lincoln, who replied that her request would be considered at the September 13 meeting. She visited Canada on September 14 to attempt to enroll again. When she was refused, she drove to Jefferson City, where Scruggs told her it would be impossible to establish a school of journalism for her that fall semester.³⁹

Bluford demanded permission to enroll through an October 6 letter addressed to

³³"Missouri U. Rejects Three," The St. Louis Argus (Feb. 3 1939), p. 1.

³⁴The Call (Feb. 3 1939).

³⁵"University of Missouri Again," The St. Louis Argus (Feb. 3 1939), p. 8.

³⁶"M.U. REJECTS A NEGRO," Kansas City Times (Jan 31 1939), p. 12.

³⁷Letter from Canada to Bluford, Feb. 4, 1939, col. 2582, fol. 2602, University of Missouri President's Office Papers, WHMC.

³⁸State of Missouri ex. rel. Bluford v. Canada, Registrar of the University of Missouri, file in Missouri Supreme Court Archives, Jefferson City, pp. 75-78, cited in Sawyer, pp. 206-207.

³⁹Bluford v. Canada, pp. 81-85, cited in Sawyer, pp. 207-208.

Canada; Martin; Henry Edward Bent, dean of the Graduate Faculty; Frederick Arnold Middlebush, president of the University; and Frank M. McDavid, president of the Board of Curators. She noted that no graduate courses in journalism were available at Lincoln University and said the University of Missouri's School of Journalism "is the only place within the state where I can obtain graduate study in journalism."⁴⁰ Bent replied on October 9 that his duties did not include deciding whom to admit to the graduate school and that her demand was "entirely out of my jurisdiction as Dean of the Graduate Faculty."⁴¹

University officials apparently anticipated litigation, because Middlebush consulted with Hogsett, one of the attorneys who had represented the university in the Gaines case, about wording a reply to attorney Sidney Redmond, who had represented Gaines. Redmond had written to inquire about the disposition of the Bluford application. Throughout the Bluford case and with other applications of blacks, University officials would frequently consult Hogsett, whose advice was relied upon to make crucial decisions in the case and to word responses to Bluford or her attorneys. Later, when the University finally decided to admit a black student, Hogsett had a hand in choosing which black student would be admitted. On this occasion, Hogsett recommended that the Board of Curators tell Redmond that they had never considered Bluford's application and that she should apply to Lincoln University.⁴²

By early October, NAACP attorneys had discovered that Gaines was missing, which may have spurred them to action on Bluford's behalf. NAACP attorneys Charles Houston of Washington, D.C., Redmond, Henry D. Espy -- all of whom had represented Gaines -- and John A. Davis of St. Louis, filed a petition on October 13, 1939, in Boone County Circuit Court seeking a writ to require the university to admit Bluford. University lawyers responded by arguing in court documents that Bluford's "right to obtain an education in the field of Journalism" was a right she should take up with Lincoln University, not the University of Missouri.⁴³

Interest was high in Bluford's case when a Boone County court hearing began in February 9, 1940. The Gaines case had been dismissed by the court on January 2, 1940, because of lack of a plaintiff.⁴⁴ Bluford's case filled the courtroom with spectators,

⁴⁰Bluford letter, October 6, 1939, col. 2582, fol. 2602, WHMC.

⁴¹Bent letter to Bluford, University of Missouri Graduate School Papers, col. 3354, fol. 294, WHMC.

⁴²William S. Hogsett letter to Middlebush, Oct. 6, 1939, col. 2582, fol. 2602, WHMC.

⁴³Bluford v. Canada, pp. 32-33, cited in Sawyer, pp. 213-214.

⁴⁴Boone County Circuit Court Record, Vol. 60, p. 297, cited in Sawyer, p. 191.

many of them white female students from the University of Missouri and Stephens College.⁴⁵ Bluford, who was the first witness, remembers being "nervous" and undergoing a relentless cross-examination by Hogsett.⁴⁶ The crux of the university's case was that Bluford's application was not made in good faith and that she was merely an agent of the NAACP attempting to integrate the University of Missouri.

Many years later, Bluford would admit that she wanted to integrate the University of Missouri more than she wanted to attend graduate school.⁴⁷ But on February 9, 1940, Bluford resisted Hogsett's attempts to make her reveal communications with one of her attorneys, Houston, that would have proved the point. At one moment in the questioning, when Houston refused to make public some communications, the court reporter noted "applause, by handclapping, in the audience."⁴⁸ Judge W.M. Dinwiddie ordered the courtroom cleared.

News coverage of this incident shows how segregated newsrooms provided two different views of the world to their readers. The fact that whites would applaud blacks in a courtroom was major news in the black press. The St. Louis Argus reported that "the white girl students present - became sympathetic toward Miss Bluford."⁴⁹ Dorothy Davis wrote in The Call that "Miss Bluford held her ground so well and with such assurance that the white students in the audience burst into laughter and loud applause."⁵⁰ The Columbia Daily Tribune, a white daily newspaper, wrote a less flattering account. In subheads, the Tribune declared "Negro Woman Seeking to Enter University Parries Attorney Question, Seeks to Force Entrance, Obstinate Attitude Starts Applause and Court Orders Room Cleared."⁵¹ The unnamed reporter, who misspelled Bluford's first name, reported that the courtroom was filled with a "hundred or more girl students from Stephens College [a nearby white, women's college], many of them wearing anklets despite the sleety weather."

The hearing resumed on Saturday, February 10. Canada testified that he did not know

⁴⁵ "Crowded Court Hears Canada, Bluford Suit," The Columbia Missourian (Feb. 9 1980), p.1.

⁴⁶ Bluford interview.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bluford v. Canada, p. 104, cited in Sawyer, p. 217.

⁴⁹ The St. Louis Argus (Feb. 16 1940), p. 12.

⁵⁰ Dorothy H. Davis, "White Students Crowd Courtroom for Two-Day Bluford vs. M.U. Trial," The Call (Feb. 16 1940), p. 1.

⁵¹ "Bluford Case Started Here This Morning," The Columbia Daily Tribune (Feb. 9 1940), p. 1.

that Bluford was Negro until she appeared for registration and that she would have been admitted to the university if she had been white. Martin's testimony was more crucial to the university's case. Martin testified that he had prepared an outline for a school of journalism at Lincoln University at the request of the Lincoln University Board of Curators in December, 1939. He also sent a list of blacks qualified to teach journalism to President Scruggs. He agreed that the outline was "substantially identical" to the University of Missouri program.⁵² He estimated the cost of an undergraduate program at \$35,000 for the first biennium and said that a graduate school could be added for \$8,744 a year. The day before the Lincoln University business manager had testified that more than half of a special \$200,000 appropriation had not been spent, although he said most of it had been encumbered. Martin also went so far as to testify that he thought it possible that Lincoln could have set up a "full course of graduate and undergraduate instruction" at Lincoln University by mid-September of 1939.⁵³

Martin also testified that he thought Bluford could not benefit from additional professional journalism work. "We have never had a case of a managing editor come back to school to fit one's self to become a better managing editor through what they would learn of the technical part of Journalism," he said.⁵⁴

Hogsett was so pleased with Martin's performance on the stand that he wrote to President Middlebush saying Martin's "assistance was invaluable. He exhibited a comprehensive approach to our problem and a sympathetic attitude throughout; and his manner of handling himself on the witness stand was superlative."⁵⁵

Black educators saw flaws in Martin's testimony. Martin's estimate of the cost of setting up a journalism school was not in line with the estimate in a report delivered at the end of the same year by consultants from the School of Journalism of the University of Illinois at Urbana and journalists from the Philadelphia Tribune and the Norfolk Journal and Guide. They estimated it would take about \$65,000 to establish the school and get it ready to open by February 1, 1941. A two year budget for 1941-42 was submitted for \$150,050, of which \$116,000 was for buildings and equipment.⁵⁶

⁵²Bluford v. Canada, p. 291, cited in Sawyer, pp. 225-226.

⁵³Bluford v. Canada, pp. 321-322, cited in Sawyer, pp. 227.

⁵⁴Bluford v. Canada, p. 323, cited in Sawyer, pp. 228.

⁵⁵Hogsett letter to Middlebush, Feb. 13, 1940, col. 2582, fol. 2603, WHMC.

⁵⁶Minutes, Lincoln University Board of Curators, Dec. 21, 1940, pp. 168-170.

Martin must have known that his cost estimates were not realistic, that the school he proposed would not be Missouri's equal and that a graduate program, which Bluford sought, could not be instituted at a school with no previous undergraduate program. Martin had visited Lincoln on January 10 and met with Scruggs and two faculty members. Scruggs told him his school lacked the money and space to start a journalism program and that efforts to recruit faculty members had not elicited any responses. Martin also met on January 16 with the Lincoln University Board of Curators to outline considerations for establishing a journalism school. He told them that they might begin graduate work in journalism if they could find a qualified teacher. The Lincoln Board then resolved that establishing a school of journalism by February 1, 1940, was impossible and resolved to try to establish one by February 1, 1941.⁵⁷

There was some dissent among Lincoln curators about setting up "separate but equal" programs. At a June 26, 1939, board meeting while the Gaines case was on appeal, curator J.E. Perry "characterized the setting up of a Law School at Lincoln University at this time as a subterfuge, stating that an effective Law School could not be established and operated at Lincoln University under such a plan."⁵⁸ Frank L. Williams also expressed opposition to establishing a law school, because graduate students had applied for courses in other disciplines and he "could not endorse the establishment of a Law School in preference to a School of Journalism, Medicine or other professions."⁵⁹

But the only opinion that carried any weight was that of the court. Judge Dinwiddie ruled against Bluford on May 31, 1940, writing in his memorandum of opinion that "No one with experience in localities where both races are numerous questions the determination that separation of the races for the purpose of education is for the general good."⁶⁰ He ruled that Bluford had not asked Lincoln for graduate coursework, and it was Lincoln's responsibility to provide it to her, not the University of Missouri. Bluford and her attorneys were denied a new trial and on June 5, 1940, appealed to the Missouri Supreme Court. The Missouri Supreme Court heard the appeal on July 8, 1941, and later ruled that Bluford had not made formal demand upon the Board of Curators of Lincoln for graduate work in journalism and that it was Lincoln's obligation to provide it to her.⁶¹

⁵⁷Minutes, Lincoln University Board of Curators, Jan. 16, 1940, pp. 90-92.

⁵⁸Minutes, Lincoln University Board of Curators, June 26, 1939, p. 53.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰State Ex. Rel. Bluford v. Canada, 153 S.W. 2d 12, cited in Sawyer, p. 231.

Bluford also filed a civil suit against Canada on November 4, 1939, in the U.S. District Court for the central division of the Western District of Missouri at Jefferson City. She sought \$10,000 in damages for each of the times that Canada had refused to admit her to the University of Missouri.⁶² When the case was heard by an all-white jury October 22, 1940, the central issue was Bluford's motives for applying to the University of Missouri. Hogsett argued that she was merely acting for the NAACP, and asked the jury for a prompt verdict favoring Canada to "discourage all future litigation of the same type." The jury ruled in favor of Canada and Judge J.C. Collett refused a request for a new trial.⁶³ Following the trial, Hogsett sent the University of Missouri Board of Curators a letter summarizing the events of the Jefferson City trial and a bill for \$3,000 for legal work done in the Bluford case.⁶⁴

Bluford was persistent and University officials were unwavering. On February 5, 1941, she went to Canada's office and again asked to enroll. "Why won't you give me a permit? It won't hurt you, it won't hurt anybody," she asked. His reply: "I simply have no authority."⁶⁵ On February 11, she telegraphed Canada: "I DO NOT FEEL IT IS FAIR FOR ME TO HAVE TO WAIT LONGER FOR GRADUATE WORK IN JOURNALISM. HAVE BEEN WAITING TWO YEARS."⁶⁶ On February 16, she sent him \$41.50 in fees, which Canada returned.⁶⁷ On August 21, 1941, she wrote to Canada again seeking application, noting that Lincoln did not offer journalism courses.⁶⁸ When Canada, upon advice of Hogsett, again refused to admit Bluford, she telegraphed President Middlebush: "IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF WHICH NEGRO BOYS AS WELL AS WHITE ARE ABOUT TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES ON THE BATTLEFIELD, I APPEAL TO YOU TO EXTEND DEMOCRACY IN OUR OWN STATE BY ORDERING MR. CANADA TO ADMIT ME AT ONCE TO MISSOURI U JOURNALISM SCHOOL."⁶⁹ Middlebush replied that "in my opinion,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, cited in Sawyer, p. 233.

⁶² *Bluford v. Canada*, p. 175, cited in Sawyer, pp. 235-236.

⁶³ "Damages Denied in Bluford Case" *The Columbia Missourian* (Oct. 25 1940), p. 1 and "Motion Is Denied In Bluford Trial," *The Columbia Missourian* (Oct. 23 1940), p. 1.

⁶⁴ Hogsett letter to Secretary Leslie Cowan, October 28, 1940, *Minutes*, University of Missouri Board of Curators, November 20, 1940, backup papers, p. 7547.

⁶⁵ Canada's memorandum of interview with Bluford, Feb. 5, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2603, WHMC.

⁶⁶ Bluford telegram to Canada, Feb. 11, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2603, WHMC.

⁶⁷ Bluford letter to Canada, Feb. 16, 1941, UMC Archives.

⁶⁸ Bluford letter to Canada, Aug. 21, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2605, WHMC.

Mr. Canada has simply performed his plain duty in declining to issue you a permit to enroll in the University of Missouri."⁷⁰

Bluford wrote to Lincoln University President Scruggs on December 30, 1941, requesting information about the Lincoln School of Journalism scheduled to open in February and asked whether classes such as "News Desk Methods," "Copy Desk Methods," and "Newspaper Making," would be available. "My needs are not mere academic and theoretical instruction, but practical courses in newspaper production," she wrote.⁷¹

The Lincoln University School of Journalism opened on February 1, 1942, and Bluford's chances to attend the University of Missouri began to wither. Bluford never attended Lincoln, declaring the program far beneath her abilities.⁷² Bluford lost her second damage suit in Federal Court, as reported by the Kansas City Times:

The main feature of her suit - that asking for court direction to open the state U's doors to her - collapses this afternoon when F. Edward Gerald, acting dean of journalism at Missouri, testified that school no longer offers the graduate journalism classes Miss Bluford wanted to attend.

The graduate school was closed in mid-winter, he said, because of a shortage of students and faculty members.⁷³

Hogsett told the University of Missouri Board of Curators that the jury in the April 23 and 24, 1942 trial ruled that Bluford's demand for graduate education had not been in good faith.⁷⁴

Bluford expressed her feelings in an April 28, 1942, letter to President Scruggs: "I refuse to permit my career to be thwarted by the erroneous verdict of a jury egged on by the most vicious appeal to race prejudices I have ever heard."⁷⁵

⁶⁹Bluford telegram to Middlebush, Sept. 19, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2606, WHMC.

⁷⁰Middlebush letter to Bluford, Sept. 27, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2605, WHMC.

⁷¹Bluford letter to Scruggs, Dec. 30, 1941, col. 2582, fol. 2606, WHMC.

⁷²Associated Press, Jefferson City, Missouri, "Ahead of the Instructors," Kansas City Times (April 24 1942), page unknown.

⁷³"Negro Loses At M.U.," Kansas City Times (April 25 1942), p. 6.

⁷⁴Hogsett letter to Cowan, April 25, 1942, Minutes, University of Missouri Board of Curators, May 16, 1942, backup papers, p. 2811.

⁷⁵Minutes, Lincoln University Board of Curators, May 9, 1942, p. 295.

By the spring of 1942, university officials had written off Bluford. When Canada asked Hogsett to word a reply to one of Bluford's letters, Hogsett advised him that by "the verdicts of two juries, Miss Bluford has now been placed in the nuisance class, and I suggest that no answer to her letter of April 28th is required."⁷⁶

The advent of World War II probably forced the cancellation of graduate coursework in journalism at the University of Missouri, although many blacks thought the Bluford case also influenced the decision to close the graduate school. Houston believed that the inadequacies of the new journalism course at Lincoln, criticized by an advisory accreditation committee, forced the closing of the Missouri graduate school, although he did note that enrollments at the white school were reduced by the draft.⁷⁷ Bluford insisted nearly 50 years later that the courses were canceled to prevent her admission.⁷⁸ When the University decided to reinstate graduate work in 1944, Hogsett wrote to Canada:

If Lucile Bluford renews her application and later brings a suit, we will, among other things, allege in defense that it has heretofore been determined by the verdict and judgement of the Federal Court that her professed yearnings for graduate work in journalism is [sic] mere pretense and is [sic] not in good faith.⁷⁹

Throughout Bluford's case, there is no indication that university officials considered soliciting faculty and student opinion about desegregating the school. The Call shed some light on this subject by reprinting an article appearing from a publication called the Independent Shoppers Review, "a Thursday weekly of Febbruary [sic] 15."⁸⁰ The article was attributed to "Mr. Fix-It," who declared himself to be a "southern born, member of a 'rebel' Democrat family" and noted that "Some of the fiery professors are saying they will resign before they will teach Negroes. Others take more conservative view and suggest that Negroes sit in one part of the class room and whites in another. Still others believe there is no problem at all and say they would simply accept the Negroes as students and forget about it." The writer of the piece speculated that it would be too expensive to spend money to expand Lincoln University just to maintain the color line. Setting up shoddy departments at Lincoln, he said, would not be fair to "ourselves, the Negroes or the court."

⁷⁶Hogsett letter to Canada, May 4, 1942, Bluford folder, UMC Archives.

⁷⁷Tushnet, p.85.

⁷⁸Bluford interview, Nov. 22, 1988.

⁷⁹Hogsett letter to Canada, May 18, 1944, Bluford folder, UMC Archives.

⁸⁰The newspaper, however, does not appear in such newspaper references as William Howard Taft's Missouri Newspapers: What and Where 1808-1963 or in the Union guide to newspapers.

Besides, the writer said, very few blacks would enroll.⁸¹

There is some evidence that some University of Missouri students did not object to integration. The university's student newspaper, The Missouri Student, published an editorial by William Edward Macklin calling for the admission of Gaines:

We who are students will have no say as to what will be done about the Negro attending school, but it is we who will go to school with him. Few will have the money to come, and those who do will come for advanced education and, for the most part, will be a superior Negro.

Our actions in accepting him will define our status as Americans. Our pilgrim, continental, Gettysburg tradition is freedom and racial equality for all. It is our cue to pioneer the nation out of this last frontier of racial prejudice and superstition.⁸²

Macklin's editorial drew response from other students. Glenn Van Horne wrote on behalf of a "number of the native Missourians enrolled here" who objected that if "Negroes" were admitted, white students would have to associate with them, admit them to sororities and fraternities, room with them, lend them money and clothes and permit them to "cut in" on dates, and "compete with them on an equal basis socially and economically as well as scholastically."⁸³ Student Charles Mgrdichan wrote refuting Van Horne and supporting the admission of a "talented scholar and, ignoring the color of his skin, helping fit him for a productive life."⁸⁴ The Missouri Student also received letters in support of the editorial from members of the ACLU, the NAACP, attorneys from West Virginia and Arkansas and a black Kentucky state legislator.⁸⁵ Gaylord P. O'Connor wrote that "Attempts by northerners and Negroes to force Southern people to accept Negroes as equal can have but one of two effects, neither of which are desirable. It will cause anti-Negro feeling ...[and] will throw more fuel on the smouldering fires of the Klan and American

⁸¹"M.U. Officials Speculate on How to Care For Negro Students If Judge Says 'Yes'," Kansas City Call (Feb. 23 1940), p. 8.

⁸²"THE INEVITABLE MR. GAINES," The Missouri Student (Dec. 14 1938), p. 2.

⁸³"Try No Half-way Solution to Gaines Case, Says M.U. Student," The Missouri Student (Jan. 11 1939), p. 2.

⁸⁴"Student Criticizes Objections to Gaines Entrance as Trivial," The Missouri Student (Jan. 18 1939), p. 4.

⁸⁵Letters were printed on page 2 of the Jan. 18, 1939, Missouri Student from Roger N. Baldwin, director of the ACLU in New York; Samuel M. Hamburger, a representative of New York Life Insurance Company, New York City; Harry H. Jones, attorney, Wheeling, West Virginia; C.W. Anderson, Jr., Representative 58 District, Jefferson County, House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Kentucky; W. Harold Flowers, attorney, Pine Bluff, Arkansas and S.R. Raymond, one of Gaines' lawyers and a member of the NAACP.

Fascism."⁸⁶

Macklin's Student editorial prompted an invitation, accepted by Martin Umansky, junior editor of the paper, to speak to the City-wide Conference on Negro Welfare in St. Louis. Umansky told participants that Macklin had polled students and faculty advisors before writing the editorial, according to an Argus account. He wondered aloud whether the legislature would provide a journalism school for negroes as it was preparing a law school at Lincoln.⁸⁷ The Call also covered Umansky's speech, quoting him as saying he regretted not meeting Bluford when she appeared on campus.⁸⁸ However, the Student did not write of Bluford's later attempts to gain admission or print other editorials in support of her admission.

After World War II, while University administrators continued to reject the applications of black students, the attitudes of administrators appeared to soften. Vice President Thomas A. Brady replied, in part, to a Liberian student who had inquired about obtaining a scholarship to study business administration:

I know nothing about you, and it may seem presumptuous in me to do so, but I am going to explain to you certain conditions that exist in this country. I know that many of the people in Liberia are negro and presume that you may be. Missouri is one of those unfortunate states in which negro slavery existed prior to the Civil War 1861-1865. In this and many others of these states, there are laws still in force which require segregation of negroes in separate educational institutions. The people of Missouri, at the present time, are considering the removal of this requirement and they may see fit to do away with it in the near future.⁸⁹

Brady also expressed concern, in a July 10, 1946, letter to Frank Luther Mott, Dean of the School of Journalism, that the school's proposal to require prospective students to submit three letters from "newspaper men or educators who were familiar with the applicant's background" might be construed as a device to exclude Jews. Brady argued that the procedure would make admission to the school determined on a personal, rather than an educational basis:

⁸⁶"Writer Defends Southern Prejudice," The Missouri Student (Feb. 15 1939), p. 4.

⁸⁷Loretta Owens, "U. Of Missouri Student Speaks At Youth Conference," The St. Louis Argus (Feb. 10 1939), p. 2.

⁸⁸"M.U. Student Editor Talks At Confab," The Call (Feb. 10 1939), p. 8.

⁸⁹Thomas A. Brady letter to Claudia Coleman, Sept. 16, 1949, University of Missouri President's Office Papers, col. 2582, fol. 2584, WHMC.

I believe the letter suggested for the purpose of limiting enrollments in Journalism school will create a very bad impression because so far as it is concerned, personal requirements may be the only requirement for admission beyond published regulations. Anyone should know that immediately when this letter becomes known, the University of Missouri will be charged with using such a procedure in order to limit the enrollment of persons of a certain race; namely, Jews. The device suggested by your faculty is a device employed constantly by private schools against all of whom the charge is constantly made that they discriminate against Jews. No amount of argument or denial is effective in combating such charges. It may be that your faculty has considered this fact and is willing to bring the School and the University into such disrepute as these charges would bring upon it. Personally, I believe it is a very bad policy.⁹⁰

Mott replied on July 12 that the limitations to enrollment would be "chiefly on the grades and pre-journalism work." He argued that there was a need to limit enrollment to prevent class overcrowding. To Brady's other suggestions, Mott said "I am inclined to resent your implication that we are looking for a comfortable way out regardless of what you think of as a sure and permanent injury to the School of Journalism."⁹¹

The color barrier finally broke in 1950 when Gus T. Ridgel was admitted to the university as a graduate student in economics and the university's first black student. Hogsett again had a hand in the decision. In a July 14, 1950, letter to President Middlebush, Hogsett commented on nine applications by black students and recommended admitting Ridgel.⁹² Cole County District Court Judge James C. Blair had upheld the right of Ridgel and two other black students to be admitted in a declaratory judgement sought by the university.⁹³ The School of Journalism's doors opened a crack for black students who were allowed to enroll just for courses that were not available at Lincoln University. Simon C. Williams, Jr., listed by the university as "colored," was admitted to a course in feature and special articles only because a similar course was not offered at Lincoln University.⁹⁴

The first black graduate of the School of Journalism was James A. Saunders, who received a master's degree in 1955. When he enrolled, Saunders, a native of Illinois and a

⁹⁰Brady to Mott, col. 2582, fol. 2546, WHMC.

⁹¹Mott's to Brady, col. 2582, fol. 2546, WHMC.

⁹²Hogsett to Middlebush, col. 2582, fol. 2610, WHMC.

⁹³Frank F. Stephens, A History of the University of Missouri (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 607.

⁹⁴Memo from Ernest H. Campbell, April 23, 1951, University of Missouri President's Office Papers, col. 2582, fol. 2587, WHMC.

graduate of the University of Illinois, was teaching at the journalism school established at Lincoln University as a result of Bluford's efforts. He says he entered the School of Journalism without any apprehensions about being the first full-time black student there.

"I didn't anticipate any problems, nor did I encounter any," said Saunders, now retired after teaching journalism at Eastern Illinois University.

Saunders did say he might have been discriminated against in job placement after graduation. Other students were exposed to job opportunities after graduation, but Saunders said, "I didn't have any of that."⁹⁵

Summary and Discussion

It is clear that in Bluford's case, University of Missouri officials were preoccupied only with maintaining the separation of races. This conclusion is based somewhat on public and media records, but mostly on the private letters, minutes and memoranda stored in university archives that are the major primary source materials of this study. Although neighboring states had admitted blacks to higher education programs in such subjects as journalism, Missouri administrators made no attempt to change Missouri's segregation. In fact, Frank Martin, dean of the School of Journalism, reacted to Bluford's application for admission by working diligently to help state officials establish a separate journalism school at Lincoln University so that black students would not have to be admitted to the University of Missouri. Bluford's efforts did persuade Missouri legislators to give Lincoln University enough money to build and establish a journalism program -- certainly separate, but by no stretch of the imagination equal to the University of Missouri School of Journalism -- to train black journalists. There is some irony in the fact that a graduate of Lincoln's journalism program, Ben Johnson, is the first black editor of The Columbia Missourian, the University of Missouri School of Journalism's daily laboratory newspaper. Bluford continued her career at the Call, and today is the publisher and majority owner of the newspaper. Her efforts in the community on behalf of civil rights were noted in 1988 when the Kansas City Public Library system dedicated a branch to her. And there is much more than irony -- perhaps atonement, perhaps a ploy to counter new charges of racism in the school that were soon to lead to large-scale student protests -- in

⁹⁵James A. Saunders, telephone interview, Nov. 16, 1988.

the fact that in 1984 the Missouri School of Journalism awarded Lucile Bluford one of its Missouri Honor Medals for distinguished service to journalism.⁹⁶ Bluford did finally get a degree from the University of Missouri on May 6, 1989, when, 50 years after turning her away, the university awarded her an honorary doctorate of humanities. She accepted "for the thousands of black students who suffered discrimination all those years."⁹⁷ But we can only wonder how the complexion of American newspapers would have changed if blacks had been admitted to the Missouri School of Journalism in 1939 rather than 1955.

⁹⁶Sally Bixby Defty, "Mizzou Honoring Editor 45 Years After Denying Her Admittance," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (April 1 1984), p. 11D.

⁹⁷"Mizzou hails woman it once spurned," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (May 7, 1989).